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**DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE**

Intelligence Report

**THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE
NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM IN CHINA**

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**THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION
AND THE NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM IN CHINA**

MEMORANDUM TO RECIPIENTS:

This broad-perspective study sets forth new findings and judgments concerning China's Cultural Revolution, profiting from previous examinations in depth of certain aspects of it. This study views the Cultural Revolution in the context of Mao Tse-tung's self-defeating efforts of the past two decades to keep revolutionary momentum alive in China; and ascribes central importance to Mao's attempt to fashion the masses into a weapon against an entrenched and obstructive party apparatus. The nature and consequences of his audacious efforts to save the Party by destroying it are the subject matter of this essay.

Its main conclusions--concerning Mao's new institutionalizing of group interest and conflict--raise fundamental questions regarding China's future. Has Mao's mystical faith that

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human nature can be remolded been invalidated?
Because Mao remains dominant yet unable to move
China as he wishes, must solutions for many of
its problems be postponed until he is gone? Can
they be? And, what will be the resulting
restraints, if any, on China's external behavior?

In preparing the study this Staff has
benefited from the comments and contributions
of a number of China officers and offices; the
study's views nonetheless represent the judgments
of this Staff

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Hal Ford
Chief, DD/I Special Research Staff

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**THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION
AND THE NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM IN CHINA**

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THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM IN CHINA

Introduction

"The aim of every revolutionary struggle in the world is the seizure and consolidation of political power." -- Mao Tse-tung

One of the most extraordinary aspects of Communist rule in China is that Mao Tse-tung, after 17 years as the leader of a totalitarian system of government, should have found it necessary to launch a second political revolution to seize power. This paper is an attempt to describe briefly both the origin and development of the Cultural Revolution and the new political system which has emerged in China as a result of the Cultural Revolution.

This analysis is based primarily upon [redacted] speeches, directives and letters of Chairman Mao Tse-tung published during the Cultural Revolution which provide a unique insight into the inner workings of China's political system. They show, for example, how Mao Tse-tung lost effective power when his revolutionary vision of the good society and his "mass-line" leadership doctrine for achieving it were slighted by the Chinese Communist Party following the collapse of the radical Great Leap Forward and commune programs in the late 1950's. They show how Mao sought in the mid-1960's to regain the power he had lost through reform of the system from within and, then, frustrated in this endeavor, launched the Cultural Revolution in an attempt to "seize power" from without. They also show that, in enlisting the support of the "revolutionary masses" and the military to overthrow a "corrupt" Party and government, Mao Tse-tung

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has constructed a new political system which institutionalizes group interest and group conflict in a way that no Communist Party has ever done.

How Power Was Lost

"In both socialist revolution and socialist construction, it is necessary to adhere to the mass line, boldly arouse the masses and unfold mass movements on a large scale."

-- Mao Tse-tung, quoted in "On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and its Historical Lessons for the World," 14 July 1964.

"You say there are no factions within the Party? But there are. For example, there are two factions with regard to mass movements." -- Mao Tse-tung, Speech at Plenary Session of the Central Committee, August 1966.

It is an underlying thesis of this paper that China's Cultural Revolution should be viewed as a struggle between adherents and opponents of Mao Tse-tung's leadership doctrine of the "mass line." Consisting of organizational and leadership techniques developed during the Yen-an period of China's revolutionary war, the "mass line" doctrine is based on the premise that it is possible, by means of a series of interactions between individual leaders (Party cadres) and the led (the masses), to involve the masses as enthusiastic and total participants in Party programs. Faith in the power of ideology to guide and motivate, in the efficacy of political indoctrination, and in the "unlimited creative power" of the masses--these are the main ingredients of the "mass line" leadership approach which had proved so successful in the political and military struggles of China's revolutionary war. Mao's insistence on applying these same techniques in the 1950's to the more complicated task of modernizing the backward economy and

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traditional society of China led, however, to loss of prestige and effective power and ultimately to the Cultural Revolution.

Explaining during the Cultural Revolution how he had earlier lost power, Mao Tse-tung traced the origin of this process, it is interesting to note, to the time "when we entered the cities." Reflecting the essentially rural and guerrilla nature of his leadership doctrine, Mao blamed entry into the cities for having generally "corrupted" the Chinese Communist Party and, as a result, for having severed the intimate Party-mass relationship so essential to the successful functioning of the "mass line."

A second important development, in Mao's account of his loss of power, was his "deliberate" decision at the time of the Eighth Party Congress in 1956 to delegate a substantial portion of his political power to Liu Shao-chi (the senior Vice-Chairman of the newly established Standing Committee of the Politburo) and to Teng Hsiao-ping (the Secretary-General) who would, respectively, "preside over important conferences" and "take charge of the daily operations" of the Party. This had been done both to promote greater efficiency (the new central organs had been set up "owing to the pressure of Party and government work") and to provide a smooth succession in the leadership (and thus avoid the errors committed in the Soviet Union following Stalin's death) -- "to foster these people's authority so that no great changes would arise in the country when the time came for me to meet my Heavenly King."

The viability of this arrangement, whereby Mao delegated substantial administrative power while retaining general decision-making power in his own hands, depended on mutual trust and joint commitment to the "mass line" leadership doctrine. The ultimate expression of this political indoctrination, "mass line" approach to economic development was, of course, the Great Leap Forward program initiated in 1958. The first test of this division of power within the top leadership occurred at the Lushan Party conference in mid-1959 when for the first time since 1935, Mao Tse-tung's personal leadership and programs were openly subjected to attack by a long-time "comrade in arms" (the then Minister of National Defense Peng Te-huai)

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who, moreover, had managed to muster considerable support within the Central Committee*. Although Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping rallied to Mao's support on this occasion, the issues and tensions generated during this intra-Party struggle at Lushan would persist and finally precipitate the Cultural Revolution.

The combined effect of irrational economic policy, successive bad harvests, and the Soviet withdrawal of technicians in the summer of 1960 dealt Mao's Great Leap Forward program of economic development a shattering blow. Confronted with the threat of economic and political collapse, the Chinese Communist regime responded with a series of urgent corrective measures in the winter of 1960-61 and then, reluctantly and painfully, with even more drastic remedies in a period of further retreat in late 1961. At an extraordinary Central Committee work conference convened in January 1962 to analyze the causes of this national crisis, Liu Shao-chi then expressed views so critical of the results of the Great Leap Forward and commune programs as to cast doubt on the validity of these programs, of the "mass line" doctrine upon which they were based, and, by extension, of the leadership of the author and champion of this doctrine, Mao Tse-tung. In a sense, the speeches by Mao and Liu and those of their supporters at this conference represented a continuation of the great debate which had taken place earlier at Lushan, with the significant difference that this time those questioning Mao's leadership were "the Liu Shao-chi - Teng Hsiao-ping group" in charge of the Party apparatus.

On the key issue of assigning responsibility for the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward and commune programs, Liu Shao-chi asserted that "it is necessary to point out at a large conference that for all these

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defects and mistakes in work over the past several years the Center must primarily take the responsibility." A principal cause of these mistakes, moreover, was that the "mass movements" mobilized for economic development had gotten out of control, "wasting the energy...of the masses" and "seriously undermining...the enthusiasm and effort of the masses..." In addition to policy errors in the economic and social fields, according to Liu, the Center had promoted an "excessive" political struggle, with the result that "both the masses and cadres...dared not tell the truth," "there was no exchange of opinion between the top and bottom," and "democratic centralism in the life of the Party...had been gravely impaired."

Aligned on the other side of this debate were Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao breathing "revolutionary optimism," as expressed in Mao's assertion at this time that "the situation is very favorable." Although willing to concede that the Central Committee and he personally were in part responsible, Mao emphasized in his speech to this extraordinary Party conference that the policy lines of the Center had been basically correct and that therefore principal responsibility for "the shortcomings and mistakes" in work lay with Party cadres who had erred in implementing these policies. To atone for these mistakes, Mao underlined the necessity for "leading personnel of the Party" at all levels to go before the masses to engage in "criticism and self-criticism." This was necessary to reunite the Party and the masses, to "mobilize the enthusiasm of the masses" without which it was impossible to "overcome difficulties." Failure to do so, Mao warned prophetically, in a threat directed specifically at "veteran revolutionaries," would lead "one day to your downfall."

In brief, the debate staged at this crucial Party work conference in January 1962 concerned basic questions of organization in a Communist society. Although both sides professed devotion to the "mass line," Liu Shao-chi stressed the responsibility and need for admission of error by the Party Center as essential to regain the confidence and support of the rank and file of Party cadres and thus protect the institutional integrity and efficacy of the Party as an instrument for carrying out "revolution from

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above." To this end, Liu as a tactic called for greater democracy within the Party, including the right to question basic policy, and in effect used this principle to bring pressure on Mao Tse-tung to change this policy. Mao countered by enlisting the masses as an ally to criticize and bring pressure on Party cadres, some of whom he attacked as "bourgeois representatives" who posed the danger of a "capitalist restoration" in China. And by calling for "arousing the masses...and supervision by the masses" to prevent this from happening, Mao appeared already to be searching for allies and organized support to stage a "revolution from below" against a defective Party and state apparatus held responsible for the failure of his revolutionary policies.

The Attempt to Regain Power

"Comrade Mao Tse-tung has called upon us in the current socialist education movement to 'reorganize our revolutionary ranks and educate man anew.'" -- Peng Chen, "Talk at the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes," in Red Flag, 31 July 1964

"The main target of the great proletarian cultural revolution is those within the party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road...The aim of the great proletarian cultural revolution is to revolutionize people's ideology so as to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in all fields of work." -- "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," 8 August 1966, in Peking Review, 12 August 1966, p. 8 and p. 11.

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At the time of the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee in September 1962, three years of privation and ignominious retreat from the original goals of the Great Leap Forward and commune programs had bred disillusionment and dissatisfaction among large segments of Chinese society and, even more alarming, among a large proportion of Party cadres extending into the top ranks of the Politburo. It was in response to this crisis of confidence that Mao Tse-tung at this time launched the "socialist education" campaign, a campaign designed to persuade the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese people once again of the validity of his revolutionary vision and of the "mass line" as the best method for achieving it.

Despite their differences over policy and organization, Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi were apparently able to reach a tacit agreement at the Tenth Plenum. As revealed in Mao's speech at the plenum, it was agreed that for a time economic reconstruction would take priority over political struggle ("we must not allow the class struggle to interfere with our work"). In this interim period, the task of dealing with "revisionism and the bourgeois question within the Party" was to be entrusted to the Party and state apparatus (two "special examination committees" and the Ministry of Public Security). With respect to the "socialist education" campaign which would focus on the countryside, moreover, both Mao and Liu had a common interest in seeking to re-establish control over agriculture as a prerequisite for new economic development.

It was, however, an uneasy and short-lived compromise. In economic planning and development, as revealed subsequently in the documents of the Cultural Revolution, Liu Shao-chi and the Party apparatus continued to slight the central tenets of Mao's "mass line" policy, substituting centralized control for decentralization and local self-sufficiency, stressing material over ideological incentives and relying on expertise and organization rather than mass campaigns. The result was a continuing debate over method and pace of economic development in the ensuing three year period, a debate which culminated in Chairman Mao's "stern criticism and rejection" of the Third Five Year Plan drawn up under Party auspices.

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As the "socialist education" campaign began to founder in its effort to re-instill a "revolutionary spirit" of self-sacrifice in the Chinese people, Mao reacted by once again blaming a defective Party apparatus for failure to implement properly the directives upon which the campaign was based.

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A year later, at a Central Committee work conference in January 1965, the most serious offenders among these high level Party officials were for the first time attacked by Mao as class enemies, identified as "those within the Party who are in authority and taking the capitalist road." The principal charge against these officials (first and foremost of whom, although unnamed, was Liu Shao-chi) was again violation of the "mass line", in this case attacking basic level cadres as a whole during the "socialist education" campaign instead of relying on and uniting "more than 95 percent of the cadres and more than 95 percent of the masses" as stipulated in this leadership doctrine.

With the unveiling of the Cultural Revolution at an expanded Politburo session in May 1966, Mao revealed that the main source of his "revisionist" opposition was indeed located at the very highest level of Party leadership. Addressing a number of these top leaders in July, Mao disclosed that revolutionary students and teachers (the precursors of the Red Guards) were going "to impose revolution on you people because you did not carry out the revolution yourselves." Employing the Red Guards as a task force to expose, criticize and intimidate his opponents within the Party, he then held forth the prospect of redemption to leaders who would "admit and examine their errors, and alongside the masses, criticize what they had done wrong." By engaging in self-criticism before the masses (as Mao had been demanding since January

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1962) and pledging their loyalty both to Chairman Mao and Mao Tse-tung's thought, Party leaders at the central and regional levels might yet save themselves.

It is a moot point whether Mao actually expected that this strategy of employing an extra-Party mass organization (the Red Guards) to compel the Party to carry out rectification and reform would actually succeed. In his August 1966 speech at the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee which adopted the Cultural Revolution decision, he expressed confidence that because of changes in the top leadership and because "only a small minority" of Party cadres would actively resist, the prospects for successful implementation of the Cultural Revolution were good.

On the other hand, he may have recalled his warning at Lushan seven years previously, that the process of ideological rectification (i.e. thought reform) cannot be successful when "carried out under coercion." And when in ensuing months this coercion took the form of a wave of violent attacks by militant Red Guards, it was not surprising that Party committees throughout China reacted by organizing workers and peasants in their defense. Within a very short time, Mao was forced to concede (in January 1967) that "most old cadres still do not understand the Cultural Revolution" and to call for the overthrow of the Party and government apparatus which they controlled. Mao Tse-tung's undertaking since 1962 to reform the Party and the political system from within had failed.

The Struggle to Seize Power

"With the Commune inaugurated, do we still need the Party? I think we need it because we must have a hard core, whether it is called the Communist Party or a social democratic party." -- Mao Tse-tung, quoted in a speech by Chang Chun-chiao, 24 February 1967.

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"It is necessary to carry out the policy of the revolutionary three-in-one combination in establishing a provisional organ of power which is revolutionary and representative and enjoys proletarian authority."
-- Mao Tse-tung, quoted in Red Flag editorial entitled "On The Revolutionary Three-in-One Combination," 30 March 1967.

In January 1967, Communist China's Cultural Revolution entered a new stage--a stage of violent overthrow of all those in positions of authority in the Party and government who refused to accept the new "revolutionary" order. Understandably alarmed by the strong resistance, Mao Tse-tung reacted by inciting the "revolutionary masses" to "seize power from below" and by authorizing the creation on an experimental basis of new revolutionary organs of power modeled after the Paris Commune. As the ultimate expression of Mao's "mass line" approach to politics, this undertaking to rely on "revolutionary mass organizations" (such as student Red Guards and worker "revolutionary rebels") and revolutionary cadres to create a viable substitute for a "bureaucratic" Party and government apparatus was probably doomed from the outset.

Factionalism, more than any other single factor, undermined Mao's grand design to mobilize the forces of the "revolutionary Left" to seize power from his opponents in 1967. Explaining late in the year why this movement had failed, Premier Chou En-lai pointed to alternating "seizures" and "counter-seizures" of power by contending factions as having produced a situation in which "seizure of power became surrender of power and power could not be retained." The most serious problem facing the Maoists in the wake of the January Revolution was that it had succeeded too well, destroying the Party and government control apparatus without providing an effective substitute. The end result, as regime spokesmen emphasized, was "anarchy," a situation aggravated by rivalry and clashes between revolutionary mass organizations acting like "a host of dragons without a leader."

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To provide this leadership, Mao then affirmed the need for a "party" to constitute the "hard core" in whatever form the new revolutionary organ of power might take. The key question, of course, was what kind of "party" composed of what kind of people. Mao's almost contemptuous reference in early 1967 to the Communist Party as only one among a number of different possible parties reflected both his bitter experience with the old Party which in his view had turned against him and a determination to reorganize this Party drastically before restoring it to a position of dominance in the new structure of power.

Until such time, power was to be entrusted to a provisional organ of revolutionary power--the Revolutionary Committee--established early in 1967 to replace the abortive Commune. In theory, power was to be shared in more or less equal proportions among three components comprising the Revolutionary Committee--a "revolutionary three in one combination" or "three way alliance" of representatives of the People's Liberation Army, of "revolutionary Party cadres" (veteran cadres deemed loyal to Mao) and of the "revolutionary masses" (new cadres drawn from student Red Guards and worker "revolutionary rebels"). Representing groups with widely differing interests, the three components of the leadership were also expected to perform differing roles, with the PLA responsible for maintaining order, the old cadres charged with providing political and administrative expertise, and the new cadres assigned such important tasks as maintaining contact with the masses, promoting revolutionary enthusiasm and, presumably, observing and reporting on the performance of the military and veteran cadres to Peking. A common devotion to, and understanding of, Mao Tse-tung's thought would, again in theory, provide the basis for a cooperative sharing of power between these divergent "allies."

The end result of this search for a "completely new organizational form for the state organs of the proletarian dictatorship" (which, it was claimed, would "greatly enrich and develop the experience of the Paris Commune...[and]...of the Soviets") was to introduce group interest and group conflict formally into the political

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system of China. Although intended perhaps as only a transitional form, the introduction of this "three-way alliance" principle into the new political structure had lasting consequences which persist to the present day.

Given the divergent goals and interests of these three "allies" and the requirement that all three agree on the composition of these new provisional organs of power, it was not surprising that by spring 1967 only Shanghai and four provinces had succeeded in setting up Revolutionary Committees approved by the central leadership. Instead, the phenomenon of "false power seizure" appeared in many provinces, with local military commanders held responsible for suppressing the "revolutionary Left" and, in at least one instance, for "carrying out savage armed suppression of revolutionary mass organizations."

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Establishing what would become a familiar pattern of development in the Cultural Revolution, Mao's decision to enhance the role of the "revolutionary masses" at the expense of the PLA produced another nation-wide outbreak of factional violence in the summer of 1967. Reacting to this threat of anarchy, Mao then issued a "great strategic plan" in September consisting of a series of "supreme instructions" designed to restore order from below by disciplining and reorganizing the "revolutionary ranks" and to restore order from above by speeding up the establishment of the new governmental structure. As Mao saw it, what had gone wrong to produce the nation-wide disturbance was not the principles underlying the Cultural Revolution but rather that these principles had been misunderstood and mistakenly applied. In fact, the principal lesson which Mao appeared to derive from his September review of developments was that all three components of the new revolutionary organs of power (the PLA, the revolutionary cadres and the revolutionary rebels) had made mistakes and would have to undergo rectification and ideological education.

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The first attempt to establish Revolutionary Committees at provincial and local levels had ended in armed struggle among and between the three components of these new revolutionary organs of power. The solution was not to scrap the design as inherently defective, but rather to change the forum of political combat from the provincial to the national level, with delegations from all delinquent provinces ordered to come to Peking to hammer out agreements under the supervision of the central leadership. Even in Peking it was not possible "to solve very quickly" the problems of these provinces since, as explained by Chou En-lai, the composition and membership of these Revolutionary Committees could not be decreed arbitrarily from above but had to be approved by all three groups comprising these organs. This meant that top leaders of the Party Center (notably Chou himself) would be forced to spend night after night of exhausting negotiating sessions lasting a month or more, during which the factional groups from the province concerned wrangled over the degree of representation and share of power to be allotted each.

As a result of the delay imposed by this time-consuming process, Mao's instruction to establish the new Revolutionary Committee structure in all the 29 provinces and principal cities of China by the end of January 1968 proved hopelessly unrealistic. Before this could be accomplished, moreover, it would be necessary to cope in the spring of 1968 with a new threat to "restore the old" in at least some of the provincial Revolutionary Committees which had been so slowly and laboriously constructed in the preceding year. As had been true a year earlier, it was considered necessary to rectify the imbalance in the three-way alliance structure of the Revolutionary Committee system by strengthening the position of the representatives of the "revolutionary mass organizations" (viewed as the "revolutionary Left") in relation to the military and Party cadre representatives (viewed as prone to Rightist error).

The effect of once again unleashing the "revolutionary masses," as might have been expected, was to revive armed struggle. Responding to this rising crescendo

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of violence, Mao Tse-tung on 28 July 1968 issued a nationwide order authorizing the army to put an end to armed struggle, dissolve the rebellious factions and restore order. With the ensuing rapid formation of the last five provincial Revolutionary Committees, it was possible to proclaim, as Premier Chou En-lai did at a mass rally on 7 September, that as a result of the "tremendous victory" in the 20 month long struggle "to seize power from the capitalist roaders" China was now "all Red."

The Struggle to Consolidate Power

"In order to do a good job in admitting new Party members...it is also necessary to have a new leading body [in Party organizations] which is a revolutionary three-in-one combination and resolutely carries out Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line." -- Red Flag editorial, "Absorb Fresh Blood from the Proletariat - An Important Question in Party Consolidation," 14 October 1968.

If the establishment at long last of Revolutionary Committees could be characterized as "the recapture by the proletariat of all the power usurped by China's Khrushchev and his agents in various localities," the central problem confronting the Maoist leadership in the fall of 1968 was how to utilize this power in the concluding stage of the Cultural Revolution. Of the two principal tasks in this final phase, the first in order of priority and importance was to reconstruct the Chinese Communist Party to provide a "hard core" of leadership within the Revolutionary Committee structure and thus consolidate the power already won. The second was an ambitious undertaking to reorganize radically China's institutional framework in accordance with Mao Tse-tung's revolutionary vision

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and, by once again arousing the revolutionary fervor of the masses, bring about a "new Leap Forward...in socialist construction." The limited progress achieved to date in implementing either of these programs raises serious questions about the ability of the Maoist leadership in Peking to impose its will at provincial and basic levels of the new power structure in China.

The crucial question in rebuilding the Party apparatus in the fall of 1968 remained the same as at the outset of the Cultural Revolution: how to ensure that the new Party would be composed of loyal and dedicated Maoist supporters. A fundamental premise of the Cultural Revolution--that it would serve to identify Mao's opponents and supporters by their conduct during the struggle--had been proven largely erroneous. As Lin Piao would reveal in his keynote political report to the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, what actually happened was that the Cultural Revolution produced "an extremely complicated situation" in which (quoting Mao) it was "hard" to distinguish "between ourselves and the enemy."

The professed belief at the outset that the "revolutionary masses" would spontaneously recognize "class enemies" and unite to form the "genuine proletarian Left" had broken down in repeated clashes between self-proclaimed Maoists contending for position and influence in the new revolutionary structure of power. The ensuing failure of the People's Liberation Army to identify and "support the revolutionary Left" (i.e. real Maoists) in a number of provinces had, moreover, been subjected to severe criticism, resulting in the purging and reorganization of most of the Military Region and Military District commands in China. To allow veteran Party cadres to take charge of reconstructing the Party was, of course, out of the question, since it had been the unwillingness or inability of the old Party apparatus to adequately reform itself which had brought on the Cultural Revolution in the first place.

For these reasons, apparently, the same "three-way alliance" principle which had governed construction of

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the new organ of state power (the Revolutionary Committee) was extended in the fall of 1968 to apply to construction of the Party as well. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the application of this organizational principle to the task of Party "consolidation and building" would mean that selection of new Party members and leaders at all levels would be governed by the same process of "repeated arguments, deliberations, consultations and examinations" which had characterized the earlier formation of Revolutionary Committees, a protracted process of "democratic consultation" in which all three components would first have to reach agreement and then submit their recommendations to a higher level for approval. The protracted nature of this process is graphically illustrated by the fact that today, nearly two years later, the Party has yet to assume its assigned role of leadership within the provincial Revolutionary Committee system, nor, with relatively few exceptions, has it done so at basic levels of society.

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The "three-way alliance" principle, it is important to note, did not apply to selection of the top leadership of the Party. As revealed in the proceedings of the Ninth Party Congress and of the first meeting of the new Central Committee in April 1969, the selection of Mao Tse-tung as Chairman and Lin Piao as Vice-Chairman as the only two officers to head the new Central Committee was clearly designed to underline the primacy of these two top leaders, with Lin now officially enshrined in the new Party Constitution as "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's close comrade in arms and successor." The composition of the Politburo Standing Committee (Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, Chou En-lai, Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng) places control over the conduct of the Party's most important affairs in the hands of hard-core Maoists by a margin of four to one. Although less clear-cut, the composition of the full 25 member Politburo also suggests that loyalty to Mao and Lin demonstrated both before and during the Cultural Revolution was a dominant consideration in their selection.

The composition of the new, much larger Central Committee "elected" at the Congress, however, suggests a

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conscious effort to apply the "three-way alliance" principle at this important level of the Party structure. Employing a criterion of primary association, the 279 full and alternate members of the new Central Committee consist of: (1) representatives of the People's Liberation Army, about 40 percent; (2) representatives of the "revolutionary cadres," about 30 percent; and (3) representatives of the "revolutionary masses," also about 30 percent.

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The second principal task of the concluding stage of the Cultural Revolution was to "transform" the superstructure and once again mobilize the masses in a new attempt to realize Mao's vision of a selfless, egalitarian and authentic Communist society in China. One of Mao's important objectives in this revolution, of course, has been to reform radically the educational system. The sending of teachers and students by the millions to labor in factories and communes in the autumn of 1968 marked the first step in this educational revolution.

Soon swelling the ranks of this mass migration to the countryside were large numbers of urban cadres sent down as part of a sizable reduction in force of the government bureaucracy. This program, as an expression of Mao's well-known anti-bureaucratic bias, was soon combined with another, much more ambitious program expressing what might be called Mao's anti-urban bias--namely, an undertaking to disperse all unemployed or underemployed urban residents to "the front line of agricultural production."

In addition to these large-scale, centrally directed programs, a number of radical social and economic experiments reminiscent of the Great Leap Forward and commune period were also introduced in the fall of 1968 on a trial basis. Reflecting the claim in the 1 October National Day editorial that this new stage of the Cultural Revolution would "consolidate and develop...China's socialist economic base," an undertaking to establish higher levels

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of socialization in agriculture, both in production and distribution, was reported in a number of provinces in the winter of 1968-69.

The most striking new reform (embodied in a nationwide campaign of learning from and emulating the model Tachai agricultural production brigade) was the introduction of a "free supply" system under which farm families would receive a large portion of income in the form of "free" food, medical care and education and other basic services. In some instances, communes inaugurating this new system required that peasants surrender their private plots and in others there were plans to re-establish public mess halls. But this attempt to re-introduce the "supply system" (a prominent feature of the Great Leap Forward and commune period) proved to be short-lived. Confronted with rising peasant discontent and with a threatened decrease in production, the Maoist leadership was forced to beat a hasty retreat in the spring of 1969.

It is important to note the rationale for this retreat, as set forth in a March 1969 Red Flag editorial entitled "On Summing Up Experience." The responsibility for failure could not, of course, be assigned to Mao's programs, but rather to "leading comrades at all levels" who had failed to understand "Chairman Mao's basic ideas... and integrate them with specific conditions in each department and unit." Since these "leading comrades" in most cases were army representatives in the Revolutionary Committee structure, the military was being held responsible for violating the "mass line" and resorting to coercion ("leading cadres should...guard against arrogance and rashness...[and]...listen attentively to the...masses") when confronted by resistance to these radical reforms.

The process of organizational reform begun at the extraordinary Central Committee work conference in January 1962 when Mao first criticized a defective Party apparatus for failing to implement properly his Great Leap Forward and commune programs had now turned full circle. After six years of intensive political indoctrination, the negative response of the "revolutionary masses" to the first attempt in the winter of 1968-69 to revive some of the

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radical features of these programs demonstrated a continued unwillingness on the part of the Chinese people to subordinate self in support of Mao's revolutionary vision. Nor had the wholesale destruction and reconstruction of the Party and state machine over that period been able to produce an apparatus any more adept at translating these policies into "the conscious action of the masses."

The combined effect of these radical campaigns had by the time of the Ninth Party Congress produced disunity and confusion at all levels of society. As revealed in Mao's speech to the first plenary session of the Ninth Central Committee held in late April 1969, one manifestation of this disunity was widespread dissension among members of a number of provincial Revolutionary Committees, a phenomenon which he also attributed in large part to the defective work style of PLA cadres serving on these committees. As in earlier phases of the Cultural Revolution when, in Mao's view, the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of order imposed from above, it was necessary once again to stress the role of the "revolutionary masses." And, as on each occasion when this had happened in the past, the end result would be still another outbreak of factional violence and anarchism.

Increasingly apprehensive about the possibility of a Soviet armed attack in the spring and summer of 1969, the Maoist leadership responded in late August by launching a massive drive to "prepare for war" in which, apparently, the army was authorized to use whatever force was required to restore public order. In recent months, the "war preparations" movement has been extended to encompass all aspects of China's political, economic and social life (as expressed in the slogan "observe everything, check everything and do everything in the light of preparedness against war") and has begun to take on the appearance of a permanent campaign. It remains to be seen whether, confronted by a Soviet military threat from without and by stubborn resistance from within, Mao Tse-tung will continue to insist on implementation of the radical, inherently disruptive domestic programs which he deems necessary to achieve his revolutionary vision.

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Conclusions

"At that time [May 1966], there were many who did not agree with me...It was said that my point of view was anachronistic."
-- Mao Tse-tung, A Talk with Foreign Visitors, 31 August 1967.

"Why is there so much quarreling?...If there is no life and death enmity, why so vehement?... We must realize that those who oppose us are not necessarily bad people." -- Mao Tse-tung, Speech at Plenary Session of the Central Committee, 28 April 1969.

In a broad sense, China's Cultural Revolution has been a dispute about the way to organize a Communist system of power, a dispute about the roles and functions of the leader, the political party and the masses in a Communist society. Originating at a time of national crisis following the collapse of the Great Leap Forward and commune programs, the dispute centered initially on the causes for the collapse of these programs and for the failure of the "mass line" upon which they were based. Was this failure the result of a defective strategy of economic and social development, an "anachronistic" attempt to apply wartime techniques developed in Yenan to the much more complicated task of economic construction, as Liu Shao-chi, representing the Party, maintained? Or was it the result of faulty execution of a fundamentally correct strategy by a "bureaucratic" Party apparatus, as Mao Tse-tung, the leader, maintained? In the struggle which followed, first to reform and then to overthrow a "revisionist" Party and government, Mao's search for loyal supporters has resulted in the creation of a new political system with unforeseen characteristics.

The most distinctive characteristic of the new political system is that it institutionalizes group

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interest and group conflict in a way no Communist system of rule has ever done. That this was not Mao's intent at the outset of the Cultural Revolution seems clear. Originating within the Revolutionary Committee structure as a temporary expedient, the extension of the "three way alliance" principle to govern reconstruction of the Chinese Communist Party as well reflected continuing doubts concerning the reliability of the new Party apparatus. The incorporation of these three "allies"--the People's Liberation Army, the old Party cadres, and the "revolutionary masses"--as integral parts of the new administrative machinery has produced a situation at provincial and local levels of the new power structure in which each "ally" tends to promote its own special interests and in which agreement depends upon a complex and protracted process of bargaining.

The need to engage in bargaining has served, in turn, to distort and block the channels of communication within the new political system, preventing, on the one hand, the flow of accurate information to the Party Center upon which policy decisions are based and, on the other hand, the prompt transmission of these decisions to the basic level for implementation. This obstruction of the communication system is responsible at least in part for the continuing inability of the Maoist leadership in Peking to complete on schedule such important domestic programs as rebuilding of the Party, drafting of a new Five Year Plan, and, most recently, convening the long-overdue National People's Congress.

Another characteristic of the new system, as it has operated to date, has been decentralization of power to intermediate and local levels. In part a deliberate undertaking to encourage local initiative and mass participation in Mao's revolutionary programs, the growth of local power, as expressed in sluggish compliance with central directives and, until recently, in periodic outbursts of armed struggle and anarchism, has clearly exceeded the limits originally intended. By undermining the authority formerly enjoyed by Party and state cadres at the local level, moreover, Mao has gone further to

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return some of the power formerly held at the basic level to the people and society at large.

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the new organization of power has been the part played by the military. As the only nation-wide organization capable of restoring order and imposing administrative control, the army has tended to dominate the new revolutionary structure of power, especially at provincial and basic levels, since the start of the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, the People's Liberation Army has discharged its role as the main executor of policy during the Cultural Revolution, and as the whipping-boy for problems resulting from that policy, with remarkable discipline and obedience. Whether in recognition of demonstrated loyalty or its entrenched position of power, the military appears destined to continue to play a prominent, if not decisive, role at provincial and local levels of the evolving political system in China.

The final, and a somewhat paradoxical, characteristic of the new political system is that there appear to be not one but two political systems operating in China today. The first, located in Peking and charged with the conduct of such key programs as national defense, foreign policy and modernization of the economy, might be called the national political system. This system has operated over the course of the past two years with relative stability and decisiveness, the record suggesting that the national leadership is able to function effectively under the domination of Mao Tse-tung.

The second, located outside Peking and responsible for carrying out the more radical political, economic and social programs which comprise Mao's revolutionary vision, might be called, for want of a better term, the local political system. The outstanding characteristics of this local system, discussed at some length in this paper, are continuing disunity and instability induced by the "three way alliance" principle which governs its organization.

How these two systems will be combined to form a single, nation-wide political system is, on the basis of

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present evidence, difficult to predict. One possibility is that dissension and group conflict will spread from the provinces to Peking, an eventuality more likely to occur if Mao should die in the near future. Another possibility is that Mao (or his successor, Lin Piao) will feel constrained to give up the "three-way alliance" principle of political organization at provincial and local levels, and return to the traditional concept of a highly disciplined, monolithic party. Whatever the outcome, it is ironic that Mao Tse-tung, four years after launching the Cultural Revolution, should find himself presiding over a political system which still frustrates his efforts to impose his will on the people and society of China.